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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the activities of a day-long health focus forum held by the State Office of Head Start in Maine. Speakers and discussion groups focused on: (1) the importance of comprehensive early childhood health programs and the need for collaboration among health professionals; (2) the role of school health programs in meeting national health and education goals; (3) the identification of challenges to collaboration and problems associated with accessing health services for children in Maine; (4) the role of Head Start in the identification of health problems among preschool children; and (5) possible solutions and recommendations to address the identified challenges and health problems. The report includes summaries of small-group discussions and recommendations. Three appendices provide a copy of the forum schedule, a participant list, and the results of a forum evaluation. (MDM)

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**SUMMARY OF THE HEAD START/STATE
FOCUS FORUM ON
CHILDREN'S HEALTH ISSUES**



Sponsored by

**Head Start/State Collaboration
Grant Project
State Office of Head Start
Cheryl Leeman, Director**

April 1994

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- B. Participant List
- C. Summary of Evaluation Form

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Copies of this document are available by writing Maine's State Office of Head Start, State House Station 11, Augusta, ME 04333-0011 or by calling (207) 287-5060.

INTRODUCTION

Service providers representing a variety of health agencies came together in March 1994 to discuss issues related to accessibility of health care for children in Maine.

The Health Focus Forum was sponsored by the State Office of Head Start and underwritten by a federal grant which funds the State of Maine Head Start Collaboration Project. Objectives for the forum were:

- ♦ To provide a setting for networking
- ♦ To share program information
- ♦ To create an opportunity for health professionals to discuss issues

The forum was opened by remarks from Lani Graham, MD, MPH, Director of the Bureau of Health and Anne Keith, RN, Dr. PH, Consultant for the Head Start Health Needs Assessment Project. Both stressed the importance of comprehensive early childhood health programs and the need for collaboration among health professionals. Specifically, Graham spoke to school health programs as essential in achieving our national health and education goals, and Keith presented findings from the first health needs assessment project conducted for Maine's Head Start programs.

A schedule was outlined by Cheryl Leeman, Director for the State Office of Head Start, who facilitated the process. She explained her role as facilitator and instructed the groups as to the ground rules:

1. Learning conference, not problem solving
2. Every idea is valid and gets recorded
3. Task focused on output
4. Stick to time

Morning group discussions centered on identification of challenges to collaboration and problems associated with accessing health services for children in Maine.

Commissioner of the State Department of Human Services, Jane Sheehan, gave the keynote address for the luncheon. She emphasized the important role of Head Start as a key player in early identification of health problems related to preschool children.

At the end of the day, groups developed possible solutions and/or recommendations to identified challenges. Also, suggestions were made as to what steps could be taken as a follow-up to this health conference.

SUMMARY OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Forum participants met in small groups to discuss challenges to accessing health services, recommendations to overcome them and steps to take as follow up to the forum. In response to the questions, commonly shared viewpoints surfaced from each group. They are summarized below:

Identification of Challenges

1) Medicaid

- ♦ limited number of providers who will take Medicaid clients
- ♦ complicated regulations
- ♦ long wait for providers to receive Medicaid reimbursement
- ♦ low reimbursement rates for services and too much paperwork
- ♦ confidentiality issues regarding release of information and lack of universal form
- ♦ lack of categorical funding

2) Service Providers

- ♦ unequal geographic distribution of providers
- ♦ lack of availability of certain types of care - mental health, dental, speech therapy
- ♦ waiting lists, Medicaid acceptance
- ♦ health care providers not pediatric focused
- ♦ program service requirements vs family needs

3) Clients

- ♦ transient population
- ♦ families in crisis, fragmented
- ♦ lack of parental involvement
- ♦ no transportation
- ♦ choices limited
- ♦ clients not always responsible with forms and keeping appointments

4) Communication

- ♦ link between federal, state and local is poor
- ♦ lack of knowledge of each other's programs
- ♦ misunderstanding of each other's needs among agencies
- ♦ turf issues, acceptance and attitude
- ♦ lack of time
- ♦ different agencies have different data bases
- ♦ legislators don't understand function of agencies

Recommendations

1) Medicaid

- ♦ make changes in Medicaid system to encourage more participation by providers
- ♦ explore better use of paraprofessionals and expanding their role in health care
- ♦ reduce restrictive/complicated regulations, including paperwork
- ♦ improve turn around time in processing payments for claims
- ♦ increase reimbursement rate to providers and expand categorical funding
- ♦ develop incentives into the program for providers to practice in underserved areas
- ♦ develop common intake and release form that could be used by all providers of health care services

2) Service Providers

- ♦ examine ways to coordinate health services to serve areas lacking in providers and certain types of services, especially in rural areas
- ♦ work to overcome barriers to participation in serving Medicaid eligible clients
- ♦ educate community as to health related issues
- ♦ establish model for integrated health delivery system
- ♦ develop and support interagency agreements
- ♦ conduct joint training for staff, parents and policy makers and other providers
- ♦ learn to advocate for the health needs of your clients
- ♦ create linkages and partnerships with local community civic organizations and others
- ♦ organize local health focus groups to include cross section of community
- ♦ focus on prevention rather than intervention on a crisis basis and promote parent involvement
- ♦ clarify goals and mission as to what is in the best interest of clients being served

3) Clients

- ♦ need to take responsibility for making scheduled appointments and bringing the necessary paperwork
- ♦ educate their children on good health habits
- ♦ work on building self-esteem and positive relationships
- ♦ participate in parent training courses, etc.
- ♦ get involved in empowering self and family
- ♦ learn to advocate for changes in health care

4) Communication

- ♦ increase formalized network meetings (federal, state and local)
- ♦ create state interdepartmental committee to work on integration of services
- ♦ organize local meetings or events where providers can share information about each others programs
- ♦ establish health social service club
- ♦ get involved in community activities, network
- ♦ recognize benefits to collaboration
- ♦ develop central directory of available service resources
- ♦ focus on team building to break through turf issues, acceptance and attitudes
- ♦ explore ways to link data systems between agencies
- ♦ increase use of electronic mail and other technological networks
- ♦ include legislators on mailing list and invitation list to events

Next Steps

- 1) Publish report on results of health focus forum.
- 2) Distribute report to Commissioner Sheehan, bureau directors, legislators, participants and other identified key players.
- 3) Organize regional meetings with all local providers involved in health care.
- 4) Convene a state interdepartmental committee to discuss issues raised at the health forum.
- 5) Local efforts should be undertaken to network and collaborate with providers of service, establish relationship with legislator.

APPENDICES

- A. Schedule for the Day
- B. Participant List
- C. Summary of Evaluation Form

APPENDIX A.

Schedule for the Day

SCHEDULE FOR THE DAY

9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Registration & Coffee
9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Welcoming Remarks Cheryl A. Leeman, Director State Office of Head Start Anne B. Keith, Consultant for Health Needs Assessment Lani Graham, MD, MPH Director, Bureau of Health
10:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.	Focus Group Discussion
11:15 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.	Group Report Out
11:45 a.m. - Noon	Break
Noon - 12:15 p.m.	Remarks by Jane Sheehan Commissioner of Department of Human Services
12:15 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Focus Group Discussion
3:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Groups Reports Out

APPENDIX B.

Participant List

STATE FOCUS FORUM ON
CHILDREN'S HEALTH ISSUES

March 29, 1994

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APPENDIX C.

Summary of Evaluation Form

HEAD START HEALTH COLLABORATION FOCUS FORUM

	<u>POOR</u>		<u>EXCELLENT</u>		
	1	2	3	4	5
1) How clearly were the objectives of the Focus Forum presented?	0	1	1	15	7
2) How would you rate the quality and usefulness of materials provided? (1 didn't respond)	0	1	8	10	4
3) Was the focus group a worthwhile sharing and learning experience?	0	1	2	15	6
4) What is your overall rating of the Health Collaboration Focus Forum?	0	1	4	16	4
5) Was the location convenient?	0	1	4	7	12
6) Would you be interested in future forums of this type?	Yes 23		No 1		
7) Other comments:					
- Hopefully this will open new channels of communication.					
- Interesting insights into certain specific local problems.					
- I did a tremendous amount of networking which I couldn't/wouldn't have done otherwise.					
- Well organized work shop.					
- It was a good day, good motives, good early results.					
- A good beginning. I look forward to the follow-up that will ultimately benefit the children and families we serve. Thank you.					
- All in same building was good - but distance.					

Other comments continued

- Need more front line staff at future forums.
- Good organization.
- Good collaborative effort. It identified the need to share successes and efforts, i.e. forms.
- No caffeine beverages - just at lunch would have been nice.
- Really good attendance and participation. Look forward to follow-up. Eager to hear Health Coordinators reactions to Forum - did this begin to meet their needs?
- This was a good conference to allow people to get to know each other. It also shared a lot of the same problems.